

2016

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission 2016 Annual Report

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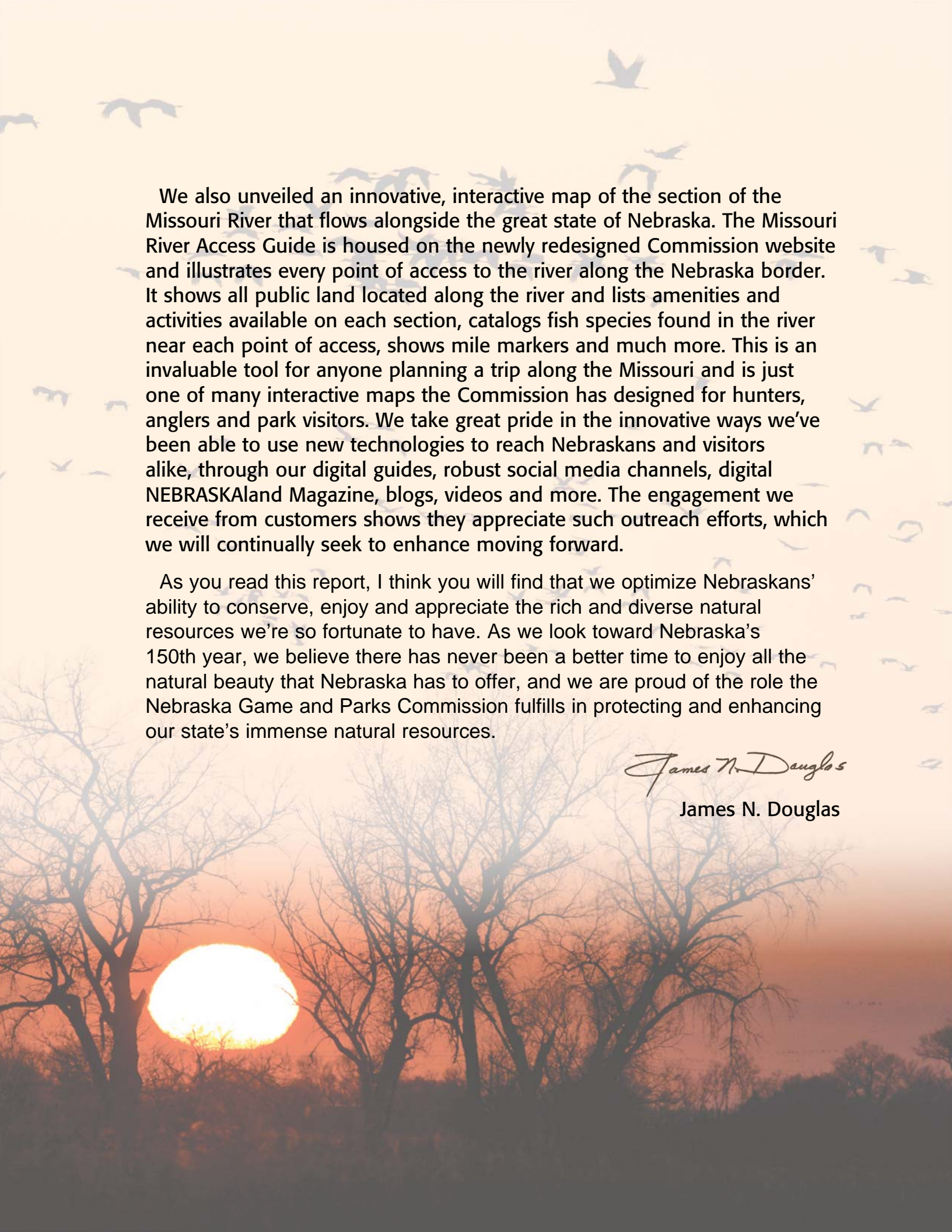
2016 Annual Report



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Our activities in 2016 showcased the breadth of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's mission. We improved trails and park facilities, worked with partners to help reverse the trend of declining monarch butterfly populations and unveiled an innovative and ambitious five-year pheasant management plan. Also, we opened a new family-friendly shooting sports complex, significantly increased the number of events we offer at our state parks and developed new ways of using technology to better serve our customers. That's in addition to the wildlife management activities, educational programs, environmental reviews, aquatic habitat projects and countless other projects and activities we undertake throughout the Commission, day after day, year after year.

While I'm proud of all the Commission accomplished in 2016, I'd like to highlight a couple of achievements that stand out. This spring, we unveiled the Berggren Plan for Pheasants. Named for late Commissioner Lynn Berggren, who passed away in early 2016, this plan aims to improve habitat, grow pheasant populations and increase pheasant hunting opportunities across the state. Our staff is working hard to improve habitat on both public and private land and enhance key partnerships – including those with landowners, hunters, Pheasants Forever, and tourism groups, among others – which will help facilitate the successful implementation of this plan. Increasingly, partnerships, both public and private, are crucial to the success of our programs, and we're grateful for the organizations and individuals that have supported us in achieving our mission.



We also unveiled an innovative, interactive map of the section of the Missouri River that flows alongside the great state of Nebraska. The Missouri River Access Guide is housed on the newly redesigned Commission website and illustrates every point of access to the river along the Nebraska border. It shows all public land located along the river and lists amenities and activities available on each section, catalogs fish species found in the river near each point of access, shows mile markers and much more. This is an invaluable tool for anyone planning a trip along the Missouri and is just one of many interactive maps the Commission has designed for hunters, anglers and park visitors. We take great pride in the innovative ways we've been able to use new technologies to reach Nebraskans and visitors alike, through our digital guides, robust social media channels, digital NEBRASKAland Magazine, blogs, videos and more. The engagement we receive from customers shows they appreciate such outreach efforts, which we will continually seek to enhance moving forward.

As you read this report, I think you will find that we optimize Nebraskans' ability to conserve, enjoy and appreciate the rich and diverse natural resources we're so fortunate to have. As we look toward Nebraska's 150th year, we believe there has never been a better time to enjoy all the natural beauty that Nebraska has to offer, and we are proud of the role the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission fulfills in protecting and enhancing our state's immense natural resources.

James N. Douglas

James N. Douglas



GAME AND PARKS AT A GLANCE

ECONOMIC IMPACT - \$2.4 BILLION

According to latest estimates, the annual economic impact of hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing and state parks on Nebraska is . . .
\$2.4 billion

Hunting – \$848 million impact
\$562 million in retail sales
8,856 jobs supported

Fishing – \$324 million impact
\$210 million in retail sales
3,076 jobs supported

Wildlife Viewing – \$722 million impact
\$513 million in retail sales
4,818 jobs supported

State Parks – \$749 million impact
\$448 million in retail sales
8,199 jobs supported

Nationally, the annual economic impact by outdoor recreation enthusiasts is . . . **\$1.6 trillion**

Outdoor recreation is a big part of our quality of life in Nebraska. It is also a significant part of economic development and tourism.

Nebraska state parks and recreation areas account for about 20 of the top 25 tourist destinations in the state.

BY THE NUMBERS

- State Park System – 77 areas encompassing 72,165 acres
- State parks – 8 areas, 31,577 acres
- State recreation areas – 60 areas, 34,801 acres
- State historical parks – 9 areas, 2,386 acres
- State recreational trails – 2 areas, 4,143 acres
- State fish hatcheries – 5
- Open Fields and Waters – 282,000 land acres, 402 water acres and 41 river miles
- Wildlife management areas – 287, encompassing 190,000 acres

WHAT WE DO

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission:

- offers a vast amount of opportunities for people to have fun, enjoy the outdoors and create memories.
- helps maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations and improves land and water habitats.
- together with outdoor pursuits has a \$2.4 billion annual economic impact in Nebraska.
- is innovative, doing what is in the best interest of all Nebraskans and the resources we manage.
- helps inform, educate and engage Nebraskans in the natural world.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

BERGGREN PLAN

In April, Game and Parks approved the Berggren Plan, a comprehensive five-year initiative aimed at improving the pheasant hunting experience in Nebraska. The plan, named after late Commissioner Lynn Berggren of Broken Bow, will work to:

- increase pheasant abundance,
- increase hunter access to land holding pheasants,
- increase numbers of potential pheasant hunters, and
- manage hunter expectations appropriately.

The Plan will consider all manageable aspects of the pheasant hunting experience. Improving upland gamebird habitat and increasing

hunter access are the cornerstone activities identified in the Plan and these efforts will be concentrated in areas where it will be most effective.

Staff prioritized and developed habitat goals on 17 public wildlife management areas and within the eight private Focus on Pheasant (FOP) and Pheasant Opportunity Areas (POA) and have begun implementation of the Plan. On private lands, area-specific landowner incentives were developed within each of the areas to improve habitat and increase public access. Promotion of Game and Parks' public access programs and new enrollments in the Open Fields and Waters (OFW) program were targeted



COMMISSIONER LYNN BERGGREN HUNTING PHEASANTS IN 2015





within the POAs and FOP areas and many existing properties were replaced with higher-quality sites. Approximately 225,000 acres were enrolled in OFW for the 2016-17 hunting season.

Excellent upland gamebird hunting opportunities exist on public lands in many regions of Nebraska. Public access opportunities in the Southwest and South-Central FOP areas increased by 6-12 percent compared to 2015-16 and were highlighted on Pheasants Forever's "Rooster Road Trip" in November. Historically, pheasant hunting provided a considerable economic boost to rural Nebraska. Re-establishing this link between pheasant hunting and rural economies is also a priority identified in the Berggren Plan. Staff have been exploring partnerships with economic development and tourism groups and communities. These new partnerships have provided opportunities for Game and Parks to share information about the Berggren Plan and gather local support.



MONARCH BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION EFFORTS

The Commission is committed to leading and coordinating efforts for monarch butterfly and pollinator conservation in Nebraska. A monarch summit was held in February to express ideas and concerns regarding Nebraska's approach to monarch conservation. The monarch butterfly population has declined 90 percent in the last 20 years. There are many factors contributing to the decline, but the plight of the monarch is gaining attention. The monarch is under consideration for protection under the Endangered Species Act, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature has designated the monarch migration a threatened phenomenon. North American wildlife managers have recommended that the Eastern monarch population be restored to 225 million butterflies. To achieve this, the national call to action is to restore or enhance 7 million acres of land for pollinators and add 1.25-to 1.5 billion stems of milkweed to breeding grounds.

With planning underway, monarch and pollinator habitat efforts are already an agency wide priority with efforts to provide new habitat, provide seed sources for additional habitat restorations, provide visible demonstration sites for monarch and pollinator



WHOOPIING CRANES



habitat and help engage and educate the public. Game and Parks is working to establish new acres of pollinator habitat at 15 state parks, thanks to funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, National Fish and Wildlife Funding and State Wildlife Grants. The Cowboy Trail is a focal project for monarch and pollinator restoration and engaging communities in milkweed planting, care and maintenance, with a total of 18,500 milkweed seedlings planted since 2015.

State fish hatcheries are pursuing pollinator restorations at six locations. Game and Parks has planted milkweed production plots on wildlife management areas (WMA) that are intended to produce more milkweed seeds for future needs on 32 WMAs. In 2015, 58,825 acres of Early Successional Habitat were implemented on public lands. Focus on Pheasants Initiative and farm bill programs have restored 62,899 acres that benefit pollinators and monarchs on private lands. Game and Parks is also asking Nebraskans to plant milkweed and native flowers, and then make their milkweed count through an online tracking system. Citizens and Master Naturalists are also contributing to tracking monarch populations through voluntary monarch surveys.

WHOOPING CRANES STAY ON WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

Whooping cranes are one of the most critically-endangered species on the planet. Approximately 300 of them remain in the wild population that migrates through Nebraska each spring and fall. Within the last year, six whooping cranes stopped over at Father Hupp Wildlife Management Area (WMA) for 20 days and three cranes stopped at Wilkinson WMA for 11 days.

Protection of the birds and their habitats is critical, so both WMAs were closed to public use during the cranes' 31-day stay. These situations created a need to "crane sit;" staff monitored the cranes and visitors to avoid any problems. This also provided an opportunity for staff to interact with observers and discuss, among other topics, funding for WMAs.

The main funding sources are the sale of hunting permits and stamps (habitat and waterfowl), which allows anyone to contribute to conservation by purchasing. Funds raised through those sales are matched, by federal funding that comes from the Pittman Robertson Act. These funds are used for land acquisition, habitat improvements on WMAs, and more critical tasks that result in more places for outdoor recreation, better wildlife habitat, and more wildlife for everyone to enjoy. Father Hupp and Wilkinson WMAs were acquired and restored with those funds, along with additional funding from partners.



IMPLEMENTATION OF AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES PROGRAM

The Nebraska Aquatic Invasive Species Program was created in 2015 by the Legislature. Income from resident boat registrations and nonresident boat stamps has generated \$187,741 as of October 2016, which is to be used for aquatic invasive species efforts including inspections, sampling, and management efforts. Efforts will be made during the winter of 2017 to further educate nonresident boaters via various media venues.



ZEBRA MUSSEL (DREISSENA POLYMORPHA)

BOATING THE MISSOURI RIVER NEAR PONCA STATE PARK



ZEBRA MUSSELS IN LEWIS AND CLARK RESERVOIR AND MISSOURI RIVER

Since the initial finding of zebra mussels, aquatic invasive species, in the fall of 2014, Lewis and Clark Lake and the Missouri River downstream are listed as infested waters. During the summer of 2016, sampling documented the rapid increase in mussel densities, especially on structures in marinas and boat dock facilities. Inspections of boat ramps along the entire Missouri River to the Kansas border have resulted in finding adult zebra mussels present. Currently, Lake Zorinsky has been listed as suspect due to positive zebra mussel veligers samples collected in June. Additional sampling has all been negative on other water bodies across the state.

TIGER TROUT CREATES OPPORTUNITIES

Tiger trout – a hybrid of brook and brown trout – are an aggressive and thus easily caught fish. They are also one of the most beautiful fish that swims in fresh water. A total of 20,420 tiger trout were stocked in the Bessey Pond at the Nebraska National Forest near Halsey, Blue Creek, White River, Ponca State Park, Fort Kearny State Recreation Area No. 6, Rock Creek Lake, Lake Ogallala, and Two Rivers No. 5 to provide diversity that we hope anglers will appreciate and enjoy.



TIGER TROUT RAISED AT ROCK CREEK HATCHERY BEING STOCKED AT LAKE OGALLALA



FISHING FOR WHITE BASS ON LAKE MCCONAUGHY

BIG FISH SET RECORDS

Nebraska is a state of big fish. Some were state record-breakers in 2016. Among the 10 state records were a 31-pound, 11-ounce muskellunge and 15-pound, 9-ounce hybrid striped bass taken by archery.



STOCKING, BY THE NUMBERS

- **46,939,053** – the number of fish stocked in 2016 by Nebraska's five state fish hatcheries
- **246** – the number of bodies of water stocked with fish
- **25** – the number of species and hybrids stocked

FRESHWATER MUSSEL RESTORATION

Due to population declines of native freshwater mussels, Game and Parks initiated propagation efforts to raise mussels in hatcheries to augment existing populations and to restore them to their historic range. In 2016, 6,592 plain pocketbook mussels were released back into the following streams: Elkhorn River (Holt County), Cache Creek (Holt County), Shell Creek (Platte County) and Rose Creek (Jefferson County). These mussels were approximately 1.5-1.75 inches in length and 15 months of age. The mussel can grow up to 7 inches in length. All the mussels were marked for future reference and research.



ROAD MAP FOR FUTURE OF FISHERIES

Game and Parks embarked on an effort to create a "Road Map for Fisheries Plan" during 2016. This plan is designed to create a pathway for future fisheries emphasis and direction. A meeting was held in March to develop a vision and goals for fisheries. Public meetings were held across the state to gather input from stakeholders. An external review of the agencies fish hatchery facilities is near completion that will be incorporated into the comprehensive plan.

COOL-WATER STREAMS

The new Cool-Water Streams program has deployed more than 90 continuous temperature loggers in 30 streams across north central and northwest Nebraska. The Stream Team has completed an instream habitat enhancement project on Long Pine Creek, initiated a riparian restoration project on the Snake River and is designing the restoration of Dry Spotted Tail Creek. Four more projects are currently in the planning stages and should be implemented in 2017.



IMPROVEMENTS MADE TO ANGLER, BOATER ACCESS

Game and Parks encourages outdoor recreation and improves access for anglers and boaters to allow them to enjoy their experience. Angler access improvement features typically include fishing pads, piers and docks; shoreline clearing; trails; accessible amenities; and improved surfacing to shorelines. Both angler and boater access improvements were made at the following wildlife management areas (WMA): Birdwood, Brady, West Brady, Hershey, West Gothenburg, Fremont Slough and West Maxwell. An angler access project was completed at East Maxwell and a boat access project was completed at Clear Lake (Brown County). Repairs to boat facilities were completed at Cottontail Lake, Elk Point at Ponca State Park, Merganser Lake, Mulberry Bend WMA, and Wild Plum WMA. Preparations for boater access improvements at Big Alkali WMA, Davis Creek Reservoir, Fremont Lakes State Recreation Area (SRA) No. 20, Memphis SRA, Merritt Reservoir SRA, Pawnee SRA, Red Cedar Lake, Stagecoach SRA, Twin Lake WMA, and Two Rivers SRA No. 5 were started in 2016.

EXTRACTING GLOCHIDIA FROM PLAIN POCKETBOOK MUSSEL AT HATCHERY



TROUT FISHING IN LONG PINE CREEK AT LONG PINE STATE RECREATION AREA

LEGACY PROJECT HABITAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Nebraska Natural Legacy Project implements voluntary, incentive-based conservation actions for the benefit of at-risk and common species. Sustainable biodiversity conservation over the long term requires habitat improvement, research and evaluation, and communication and education. The Legacy Project addresses these components through an effective structure of partnerships and by securing funding from external sources. Ground-level habitat improvements are focused primarily in Biologically Unique Landscapes (BUL), which contain relatively intact habitat and higher concentrations of declining species. The most common actions to enhance and restore habitat include invasive species removal, re-introducing natural disturbance such as prescribed fire and modifying existing management tools such as grazing. Over the last three years, thanks to the Nebraska Environmental Trust and State Wildlife Grant Funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 159,345 acres were enhanced (97 percent private land), 1,138 landowners were engaged in projects and ultimately habitat was improved for 89 at-risk species.



SWIFT FOXES AT OGLALA NATIONAL GRASSLANDS



BULL ELK SPAR IN A PASTURE NORTH OF THE NIobrARA RIVER

PILOT STUDY FOR ESTIMATING ELK POPULATIONS

Wildlife agencies have had difficulty estimating elk and deer populations in areas of dense canopy cover with traditional aerial surveys, as well as newer methods such as forward-looking infrared imaging systems. Game and Parks has encountered similar issues in the Box Elder Elk Management Unit in the Loess Canyons in southwest Nebraska due to dense eastern red cedar cover. Non-invasive genetic sampling (NGS) Mark-Recapture techniques have been successfully applied to cougar fecal samples in Nebraska, and the agency believed these methods were feasible for elk. Staff surveyed a 10-square-mile known elk wintering area for five days in March and collected 193 fecal samples. Of the 193 samples collected, 125 contained valid elk DNA. Fifty-eight individual elk were identified: 30 females, 23 males and five in which sex could not be determined. The analyzed data produced a population estimate of 99 individuals. Staff believed this estimate was accurate and reasonable given landowner reports and what is known about this particular herd. The agency plans to survey the entire unit during the winter of 2016-2017.



BIGHORN SHEEP CONSERVATION AND NEW RECORD BIGHORN RAM

December marked the completion of the 35th year of bighorn sheep management and conservation in Nebraska. It also marked a year when a state record-breaking ram scored 190 5/8. Since the reintroduction of bighorn sheep back to Nebraska in 1981, 21 bighorns have been harvested with 100 percent success. Nebraska's bighorn sheep management program includes reintroducing bighorns back to their native lands and establishing a self-sustaining, viable population. Along with support from several conservation groups, five introductions of bighorns have occurred, with each herd establishing itself in a different location. Since, 1998 approximately \$630,000 has been raised through lottery, permit application fees. Another \$640,000 has been raised through permits sold through auction. Conservation groups have also contributed extensive funding to the bighorn sheep program. Bighorn sheep remain one of Nebraska's most popular species yet remain an At-Risk species in the state. Extensive management and research continue with the disease challenges that face this iconic species. Approximately 320 sheep live in the Pine Ridge and Wildcat Hills escarpments of western Nebraska, providing viewing, photography, hunting and educational opportunities.

CONSERVATION ROUNDTABLE IDENTIFIES KEY ISSUES

The Nebraska Conservation Roundtable helps the conservation community become a more cohesive voice, create dialogue and foster collaboration, serve as a resource for policy makers and provide solutions for issues impacting Nebraska's fish and wildlife habitat. The Roundtable, with representatives from approximately two dozen organizations, has identified the primary issues facing fish, wildlife and habitat conservation in Nebraska that will require a collective and collaborative effort. The issues are: eastern red cedar encroachment, degraded water resources, grassland conversion, inappropriately sited energy development, climate change, reduced state funding for conservation, and invasive species and disease. The Roundtable has recently completed a report that presents the scope of the eastern red cedar invasion, current statistics, and the necessary funding and resources to prevent more invasion. This report has proved useful in securing grants and aligning conservation partners, and will be shared with state senators in 2017.

TERRY BOGLE WITH THE BIGHORN SHEEP HE HARVESTED IN THE PINE RIDGE SOUTHEAST OF CRAWFORD





BIG GAME A BIG DEAL IN NEBRASKA

Nebraska's top-notch big game hunting is known across the nation. Hunters come from all over for the Cornhusker State's diverse opportunities and potential trophies. One such trophy taken in 2016 was a state-record elk. It is not only the new non-typical record for Nebraska, it also ranks 16th in the all-time world records maintained by the Boone and Crockett Club. The bull, harvested in September near Crawford, was officially scored at 430 6/8. Nebraska is also known for its coveted mule deer. Through November, the state's mule deer harvest was on pace to set a record, having increased for the third straight year.

PEREGRINE FALCON REHAB AND RELEASE

The peregrine falcons that call Nebraska's Capitol building home had a memorable 2016 nesting season. The pair welcomed five eggs into their nest box in early April, with only one egg hatching in May. The apparent infertility of four eggs was believed to be due to the advanced age of the pair. Shortly after the one egg hatched, the male adult was found injured in north Lincoln with what Fontenelle Forest's Raptor Recovery determined was a dislocated elbow. The female adult raised the young falcon, which was named "Dinan," by herself and it fledged in late June. The name honors John J. Dinan, former Game and Parks nongame bird program manager, who was instrumental in initiating the peregrine falcon projects at the Nebraska Capitol and WoodmenLife Tower. After several months in rehab, the male was released at the Capitol in October and appears to be thriving.



THE MALE PEREGRINE FALCON *19/K*

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA ACQUISITIONS BENEFIT WILDLIFE

Acquisition of land for use as wildlife management areas (WMA) is increasingly important to conserve important wildlife habitats and to provide hunting, trapping and fishing opportunities. It also provides the public with an opportunity to experience wildlife and their habitats within a natural outdoor environment, enhance wildlife, fish and plant species and conserve natural plant and wildlife species. In a state that is 97 percent privately owned, acquiring land for consumptive and non-consumptive outdoor recreation is essential to Game and Parks' goal of providing diverse outdoor opportunities. In 2016, Game and Parks acquired additions to three existing WMAs, traded for land on two areas and acquired a new WMA. Acres were acquired on Ayr Lake WMA in Adams County and an acre-for-acre land trade occurred on Whitefront WMA in Clay County, which are both wetland areas and provide more options for waterfowl management. Acres were acquired on Chat Canyon WMA in Cherry County, and Ponderosa WMA and Chadron Creek WMA in Dawes County, as well as an acre-for-acre land trade on Gilbert-Baker WMA in Sioux County that will add elk and deer habitat to these areas. In Knox County, 998 acres were acquired along the Missouri River floodplain to establish the Niobrara Confluence WMA. This area, located at the mouth of the Niobrara River, borders the Missouri and contains off-river wetland habitat to create excellent hunting, trapping and fishing prospects. This area adjoins Niobrara State Park and Bazile Creek WMA, forming a 6,730-acre complex for multiple uses.

CRP CELEBRATES 30TH ANNIVERSARY

In August, Farm Service Agency Administrator Val Dolcini addressed a group of conservation partners, landowners, media and Congressional representatives near Valparaiso to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). This event, co-hosted by Game and Parks, celebrated the many accomplishments of CRP, the most successful federal conservation program in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's history. The nearly 800,000 acres enrolled in Nebraska provide vital nesting for grassland birds, control erosion on highly erodible land, and improve water quality. CRP also offers abundant opportunities for hunters pursuing pheasants, quail, deer and turkey.



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

RECRUITING, RETAINING AND REACTIVATING HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

Game and Parks is a proud leader in the R3 Task Force, which has a goal of recruitment, retention and reactivation of hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts. The task force is made up of representatives of governmental and non-governmental wildlife resource organizations, industry partners and other stakeholders. In 2016, the task force developed a plan, which outlines steps to increase participation in hunting and shooting sports. In Nebraska, a state R3 coordinator was hired by the National Wild Turkey Federation in partnership with Game and Parks. The coordinator's goals are to collaborate on R3 efforts in Nebraska and expand recruitment via new and existing programs.

HALF-PRICE YOUTH LIFETIME PERMIT BENEFITS MORE THAN 5,000 YOUTH

Created in 2006, the half-price youth lifetime permit program was the vision of a former Commissioner who created an endowment through the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation. Nebraska youth ages 15 and younger, get the opportunity to purchase a lifetime hunting or fishing permit, with half the cost paid for by the Foundation. Due to the generosity of donors, the program has helped nearly 5,200 youth obtain a permit to hunt or fish for a lifetime. The Game and Parks Foundation has invested more than \$960,000 in the program. Including federal matching funds, this investment has a projected impact of \$7.25 million to support future conservation efforts in Nebraska.



4-YEAR-OLD RICK SPECK WAS ONE OF THE 2016 WINNERS

SPRING SHOTGUN TURKEY HUNTING WITH MENTOR IN ???????????? COUNTY



PUBLIC OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

- Classes in Hunter and Boater Education
- Outdoor Expos
- Outdoor Skills and Outdoor Discovery Programs
- Youth Mentored Hunts, and Family-Friendly Shooting Ranges
- Living History Weekends, Park Events and Naturalist Programs
- Project Wild, Growing Up Wild, and Trout in the Classroom
- Aquatic Education and Family Fishing Nights
- Nebraska Archery in the Schools Program
- Becoming an Outdoors-Woman
- Public Meetings and Media Outreach
- Nebraska State Fair
- Web and Social Media



YOUTH PHEASANT HUNT AT HICKORY RIDGE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA



ADDITIONAL SITES BRING MORE PHEASANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPECIAL YOUTH HUNTS

Game and Parks expanded opportunities for youth to hunt pheasants in 2016. An additional four wildlife management areas (WMA) were added to the list of sites participating in the special youth pheasant hunts, bringing the total to 14 WMAs. In its sixth year, the hunts remain popular with youth participants and their mentors, and provide an opportunity for new and novice hunters to see and have an opportunity to harvest pheasants. At each participating site, hundreds of rooster pheasants are released the day before the youth hunting season opens. The hunts were a success, as youth participation increased 33 percent from 2015 and harvest increased 55 percent.



HUNTER EDUCATION FIELD DAY AT THE ERIC WIEBE SHOOTING COMPLEX AT PONCA STATE PARK

MODERNIZING HUNTER EDUCATION

Nebraska is breaking down barriers when it comes to obtaining a hunter education certificate. In 2015, changes to hunter education made the program more convenient to new hunters and easier to obtain certification. Changes included adding an online course as an option for some students and replacing the field day with a two-hour Hunt Safe Session for some students who complete the online course. The changes increased the number of students certified from 8,000 to 9,000 annually. Another change in 2016 provided for an online combined firearm/bowhunter education course. Nebraska still offers the traditional classroom course, which is where most students still prefer to obtain their education; however, the recent changes provide options for busy families who have found hunter education certification difficult to obtain in the past.



SKY FORT POPULAR ADDITION TO STATE FAIR

The Game and Parks Outdoor Encounter in the Nebraska Building has been an extremely popular exhibit with fairgoers. In 2016, Game and Parks expanded its exhibit to include a sky fort, an elevated tree house-like structure positioned over a stream. This sky fort allows youth and adults alike to play and explore outdoors. At the Outdoor Encounter, visitors can view a diorama of the Niobrara River, shoot at indoor archery and pellet gun ranges, see Nebraska fish species in a 6,000-gallon aquarium, or relax in the landscaped outdoor area as their children play on the natural outdoor playground.



FAIR VISITORS CROSSING THE STREAM AT THE OUTDOOR EXHIBIT

GRANT HELPS ELEMENTARY STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT OUTDOORS

Game and Parks partnered with North Platte's Lincoln Elementary School to teach fourth- and fifth-grade students about the outdoors. Public information officer Julie Geiser taught kids various lifelong outdoor skills, including how to set up a tent and how to build and maintain a fire. Geiser worked with the school district to apply for a grant to buy tents, camping supplies and other gear. The Nebraska Department of Education grant was a win-win for Game and Parks and the school. The equipment will allow Game and Parks to help youth and adults to experience the outdoors for years to come, while participating students learned lifelong skills, as well as about careers working with Nebraska's outdoor resources.



GEISER TEACHES A NORTH PLATTE ELEMENTARY CLASS OUTDOOR SKILLS

PRIORITIZING WILDLIFE EDUCATION

Since its inception in 1983, Nebraska Project WILD has grown to include trainings for teachers and educators focusing on several conservation and environmental education resources for use in classrooms. These include Project WILD, Aquatic WILD, Growing Up WILD, Flying WILD, as well as topic-specific workshops such as pollinators, bats, birds, mammals and seasons. A 2016 survey revealed that workshop participants are using the resources more than once per year. Overall, the survey revealed that regardless of the time allocated to science and conservation education in Nebraska's classrooms, educators are finding time to use Project WILD and Growing Up WILD. Additionally, the survey revealed the desires of constituents for future educational resources and workshops.





COMPETITORS TAKE PART IN THE INAUGURAL DIRECTOR'S CUP ARCHERY TOURNAMENT AT THE NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS OUTDOORS EDUCATION CENTER IN LINCOLN

OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTER LEADS WAY IN SHOOTING SPORTS EDUCATION

The Nebraska Game and Parks Outdoor Education Center, which opened in 2014, has found a unique niche in developing new hunters and shooters. In 2016, the center greatly expanded its day camps and programs for youth archery. The support from the public has resulted in the doubling of revenue from 2015 to 2016. The facility has also offered novice shooting programs to adult women, which have become extremely popular. In June, Game and Parks hosted the first Director's Cup Archery Tournament. Developed in cooperation with Game and Parks Director Jim Douglas, Cabela's and archery clubs, the tournament was a new twist on reaching out to experienced and novice archers. The tournament drew 33 registered shooters, about half of them were youth. The facility, which plans to expand education programming, has served more than 33,000 customers since opening.

SHOOTING SPORTS PARTICIPATION AT AN ALL TIME HIGH

By the numbers:

- **35,000** – number of participants in Nebraska's National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP)
- **760** – number of NASP state tournament participants
- **2,584** – number of participants in Cornhusker Trapshoot
- **2,067** – number of Cornhusker Trapshoot participants who hunt or fish

BECOMING AN OUTDOORS-WOMAN CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Weekend celebrated its 25th year in 2016. This annual retreat brings together women from across Nebraska and beyond to learn basic outdoor skills from expert instructors. Over the life of this program, hundreds of women have experienced fishing, kayaking, archery, shooting sports, kayaking, hiking, Dutch oven cooking, plant and animal identification and many outdoor activities. Through this program, which in 2016 was held at Ponca State Park, friendships have formed, traditions have been established and many women have become expert participants in outdoor pursuits they might not have otherwise been able to experience.

OUTREACH TO DIVERSE AUDIENCES

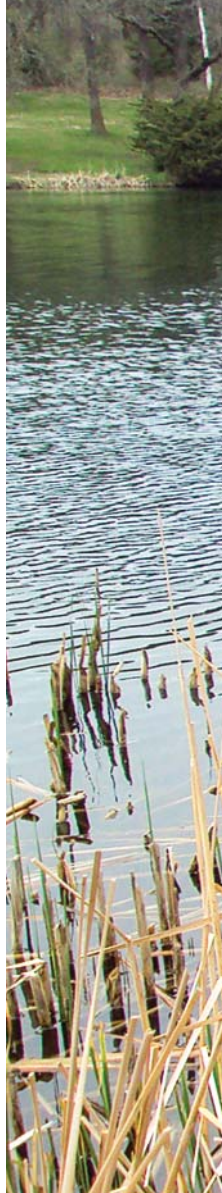
Outreach to audiences that traditionally have been underserved in outdoor recreation is important to Game and Parks. Among the outreach efforts to these groups in 2016:

The Hunter Education Team initiated a Spanish Hunter Education Class at the Nebraska Outdoor Education Center in September. The class was designed to reach Spanish speaking customers in an effort to remove language barriers to hunting. The class was a success and we plan to expand partnerships into this community.

In August, Fisheries Division staff delivered a presentation to Omaha's Lutheran Family Services Cultural Orientation class for refugees who have recently arrived in the United States. More than 50 adults and 13 children attended the presentation, and seven interpreters translated the presentation in the following languages: Arabic, Burmese, Dari, Karen, Karenni, Nepali, Somali and Swahili. The presentation covered an introduction to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Nebraska's fishing regulations, fishing opportunities in the Omaha metro area and where to find fishing and hunting information online and in print.

For the fifth year, a special family camp for families who are deaf or hard of hearing was held at Platte River State Park. The 22 children and 19 adults in attendance experienced fishing, kayaking, Dutch oven cooking, archery, trap shooting and horse trail rides, among other activities.

SPECIAL FAMILY CAMP FOR FAMILIES WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING AT PLATTE RIVER STATE PARK



NEBRASKA CELEBRATES MIGRATORY BIRDS

The International Migratory Bird Treaty marked its centennial in 2016. This historic agreement arranged for the conservation of bird species throughout prairies, wetlands, forests and farmland across North and South America. Although International Migratory Bird Month is celebrated annually in Nebraska, the goal of the 2016 event was to impress the importance of birds and their conservation on Nebraska's ecosystems and economy. More than 48 events were held in 27 communities across the state. Gov. Pete Ricketts signed a proclamation declaring May as Nebraska Migratory Bird Month, and Lt. Gov. Mike Foley attended a children's birding festival at a Lincoln elementary school.



LT. GOVERNOR MIKE FOLEY ATTENDS A BIRDING FESTIVAL IN LINCOLN



AQUATIC EDUCATION PROGRAM REACHES THOUSANDS

Each year, Game and Parks provides newcomers and novices the opportunity to learn and spend some time fishing. In 2016, the agency hosted 27 Family Fishing events, in which equipment, bait and instruction were provided. Other opportunities included Carp-O-Rama carp fishing events and ice-fishing workshops. In all, more than 200 activities were hosted by Youth Fishing Program volunteers, reaching nearly 18,000 Nebraskans. Two classroom aquatic programs continued to expand. Trout in the Classroom allowed 2,400 students to hatch and raise rainbow trout, thus learning about aquatic ecosystems, water quality, aquatic life cycles, Nebraska fish species and recreational fishing. The Fishing in Nebraska Schools program gave 2,500 students the chance to learn basic fishing skills, including equipment, techniques, fish identification and life history. In both programs, students became familiar with the role of the agency in protecting and managing the state's aquatic resources.

STATE PARKS

PARKS ARE GATEWAYS FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION AND EDUCATION

Parks across the state have responded to visitor expectations of providing memorable experiences by offering a variety of new programming opportunities. In addition to the naturalists and outdoor education specialists already working throughout the state, Game and Parks added new seasonal naturalist positions at Fremont Lakes State Recreation Area (SRA), Lake McConaughy SRA, and Fort Kearny State Historical Park (SHP). This resulted in 90 new programs attended by more than 6,000 people in 16 park areas. October, now one of the busiest months of the year for parks, provides visitors with opportunities such as the Heritage Days festival at Fort Atkinson SHP and birding walks and nature journaling at Lake McConaughy SRA. More than 10,000 people participated in a Boy Scout Jubilee at Eugene T. Mahoney SP. Parks hosted more than 25 Halloween events, each of which enjoyed a record numbers of visitors. Other programming included Toast Nebraska at Mahoney State Park (SP), outdoor movies at Calamus SRA and Fort Hartsuff SHP, a regional gathering of historical reenactors at Fort Atkinson SHP, and a Native American cultural event, at Indian Cave SP. Red Willow SRA held a kids essay contest wherein the first prize winner received a kayak donated by a sponsor.

FAMILY TENT CAMPING SITE AT FREMONT LAKES STATE RECREATION AREA



FORT ROBINSON STATE PARK, HORSE TRAIL RIDES TO TOP OF RED CLOUD BUTTES.







PONCA STATE PARK AQUATIC CENTER WAS BUILT IN 2016

IMPROVEMENTS ENHANCE VISITORS' PARK EXPERIENCE

Game and Parks completed several important park projects in 2016, thanks to the deferred maintenance funding secured during the 2014 legislative session. These improvements will enhance visitors' park experiences as they create lifelong memories with friends and families.

Ponca State Park's (SP) new family aquatic center, which will accommodate up to 250 visitors, includes a pool, waterslide, spray features, and a climbing wall.

The roads at Indian Cave SP have been resurfaced or stabilized, with funds used from the Recreational Road Program. A new kiosk was also built at the park entrance to provide arriving visitors a positive experience at the park.

A substantial addition has been built at Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area (SRA) Nature Center. The Nature Center will house the main office, expanded meeting facilities, classrooms and interpretive exhibits. The renovated Nature Center will open in the spring of 2017.

Platte River SP's Jenny Newman Lake has received a number of improvements. A new water control structure, accessible fishing piers and a boat ramp were installed. An interpretive stream was created and flows through a series of shallow ponds in which children can play as they discover the biology riparian and pond environments have to offer. The water system was updated with a water tower, increased pressure and flow rates, and an improved rural water connection. These improvements provide a quality infrastructure to better serve the public and provide for fire suppression.

Campground electrical upgrades from 30 amps to 50 amps were completed at the Southwest Reservoirs, Calamus SRA, Merritt SRA and Maloney SRA. Modern, all-concrete shower buildings were added to five state recreation areas and 14 vault toilets were added to park areas.

Wastewater systems have been designed for Platte River SP, Fremont Lakes SRA and Two Rivers SRA, and a water supply system was designed for Indian Cave SP.

SEVERAL PARKS CELEBRATE MILESTONES

Chadron State Park (SP), Nebraska's first state park, celebrated its 95th anniversary in June with a variety of activities. They included free paddleboat rides, bounce house, nature activities, presentations of blacksmithing and primitive box making, classic cars, live music, pellet gun shooting, and an archery shoot.

Eugene T. Mahoney SP celebrated its 25th anniversary on July 16 with a party that included music, rock climbing and a bounce house. Throughout the year, the park celebrated its anniversary with special pricing for items such as miniature golf and paddleboats.

Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park celebrated its 25th anniversary. The park has added high-quality exhibits, interpretive facilities and educational programming.



FUTURE OF LAKE MCCONAUGHY AND LAKE OGALLALA TAKING SHAPE

Lake McConaughy and Lake Ogallala state recreation areas are two of Nebraska's most popular state recreation areas. With more than 100 miles of shoreline and 40,000 acres of land and water, they provide tremendous recreational value to the state. Game and Parks approved the Lake McConaughy/Lake Ogallala Master Plan in October. This

20-year plan guides the agency on the development of the lakes and addresses current and future management issues and operational challenges. The plan will conserve the natural resources of the lakes and provide high-quality recreational experiences. A local advisory committee assisted in creating 10 goals for the

future of the lakes. Public input was sought through a series of meetings, along with meetings with Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District who own the lakes and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who are interested in the protection of the threatened and endangered species that nest at the lakes. The plan is a living, adaptive document that will change given new information, opportunities and effectiveness of meeting the outlined goals.



CAMPING AND FISHING AT LAKE MCCONAUGHY SRA



SHOOTING COMPLEX AT WILDCAT HILLS STATE RECREATION AREA

WILDCAT HILLS SHOOTING RANGE AT AIMS TO PLEASE

A new shooting facility at Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area opened in the late summer, providing a modern, safe environment for shooting sports enthusiasts. The range offers new and experienced shooters a variety of scenarios. The complex features facilities to accommodate rimfire rifles, high-powered rifles, shotguns, pistols air rifles and archery. The range is popular with hunters sighting in rifles, parents teaching children the safe use of firearms, and first-time shooters.

MOVING FORWARD WITH VENTURE PARKS

In an effort to provide more types of park experiences, Game and Parks is planning the first phase of the Venture Park complex for Eugene T. Mahoney State Park (SP), Platte River SP, Louisville State Recreation Area (SRA) and Schramm Park SRA. These parks will provide different experiences for visitors, expanding educational opportunities and creating adventures around every corner. The Venture Park complex is a \$35.5 million project, with the majority of funding coming from private donors and foundations. Conceptual planning was completed in early spring and an engineer was hired to design and build key elements of the first phase of the complex. These key elements provide new, unique lodging opportunities, water features, indoor climbing features, all-season tubing and sledding, canoe/kayaking access points, and a state-of-the-art Aquatic and Nature Interactive Exploration Center. Other elements of the phase are biking and hiking trails, natural playgrounds and climbing features, floating playground, naturalist programming, and infrastructure improvements. Construction will begin in early spring of 2017 on first phase projects and should be completed, depending on the project, in late 2017 or early 2018.

FORT ATKINSON STATE HISTORICAL PARK TACTICAL PLAN

Fort Atkinson is rich with history and is an excellent example of westward expansion in the United States. Game and Parks created an advisory committee of the public to develop the five-year Fort Atkinson State Historical Park Tactical Plan. The vision created by the committee for Fort Atkinson is "to be a viable tourist destination that offers quality historical interpretation of the westward expansion of the U.S. and Fort Atkinson's role in this history that increases visitation to the Fort and the community of Fort Calhoun." The committee is defining roles for each partner, setting priorities, identifying potential funding sources, and working as a partnership to ensure the plan's success.



QUILT PROJECT AT FORT ATKINSON STATE HISTORICAL PARK



FORT ATKINSON FOURTH OF JULY REENACTORS AND VISITORS



FORT ROBINSON STATE PARK'S QUILT PROJECT

Quilts were donated to Fort Robinson State Park to be placed on beds in the brick officer quarters. The quilts are similar to the bedcovers that you would have found at the fort when it was an active U.S. Cavalry post in the late 19th century. The park sought at least 30 quilts from quilters and received 53 queen-sized bed quilts in a variety of styles and colors. An estimated value of each quilt is \$1,500.

TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS

NEBRASKA BEST TURKEY HUNTING DESTINATION IN NATION

Nebraska offers an amazing turkey hunting experience. The state offers plentiful and affordable permits, long seasons, great public access and \$5 permits for youth. Turkeys can be found in every county of the state, and hunters will find good turkey opportunities on more than 500,000 acres of public and public-access land in Nebraska. Additionally, Nebraska is the easternmost state with large populations of highly sought after Merriam's turkeys. All these factors allowed Game and Parks to position Nebraska as the nation's top turkey hunting destination to nonresident hunters. As a result, the number of nonresidents who visited Nebraska to hunt turkey increased, as did the state's reputation as a turkey hunting hotspot. The campaign will continue in 2017 and beyond.



TURKEY HUNTERS CALLING

TOM TURKEY



NEBRASKA WATERFOWL ZONES APPLICATION

In an effort to help hunters discover the detailed boundaries of waterfowl zones they will hunt, Game and Parks developed the Nebraska Waterfowl Zones Application. This new computer- and mobile-friendly GIS application also allows hunters to quickly retrieve information related to a particular zone. The zone maps portray those as seen in the Nebraska Waterfowl Guide, but viewing waterfowl zones in this way gives users an interactive experience. It allows its users to zoom in to view boundary roads, search for an address or city, click or tap on a zone of interest to retrieve the zone's season dates, shooting hours, bag limits, possession, as well as other notes. When using this application on a mobile device with a cellular connection, the auto locate button within the application will place a point on the map and automatically zoom to that location. The application may be found at OutdoorNebraska.org.

CUSTOMERS' AUTOMATED REMINDER EMAILS

We live in a changing world where customers expect ease and convenience when it comes to making purchases big and small. In 2016, Game and Parks worked with email vendor GovDelivery to remind customers when it's time to purchase a new permit. GovDelivery is able to look at when customers purchased permits during the preceding year, and automatically send them an email reminding them to purchase that same permit at the same time the following year. This program also automatically sends customers links to guides, public access locations and more after they've purchased a permit. In 2016, Game and Parks began offering automated reminders for fishing permit buyers. In the coming years, the program will be expanded to include park and hunting permits too.

DUCK HUNTING AT LANGDON BEND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA





MISSOURI RIVER OUTDOOR RECREATION GUIDE

The Missouri River flows approximately 400 miles along Nebraska's eastern border, where there are approximately 160 public access sites on either side of the river. Game and Parks created the Missouri River Outdoor Recreation Guide – user-friendly GIS map that provides information on all recreational opportunities along the river. It can be used as a safety and navigational tool for boating, thanks to the river segment descriptions, river mile markers, and proximity to boat ramps and cities. It provides information and photographs on fishing opportunities, hunting access sites, wildlife viewing areas, camping



and other recreational activities along the river. The river map is segmented into nine parts, designed to follow the river's north-to-south downstream flow. Each segment has a description that includes depth, unique qualities, hazards, recreational information and other information that will be important to the public. This project was recognized at the 2016 Environmental Systems Research Institute conference and won first place in the Story Map contest for Best Travel, Destinations and Recreation category. This guide is a web-based application that can be used on a computer or a mobile device and can be found at OutdoorNebraska.org.



PADDLING KAYAKS ON LEWIS AND CLARK LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA

PUBLIC SAFETY

ROLE OF THE CONSERVATION OFFICER

The Law Enforcement Division is charged with the enforcement of statutes relating primarily to the Game Law, State Boat Act, and State Park Act, and the enforcement of regulations and orders promulgated by the Commission relating to the management and use of fish and wildlife resources, in the state park areas, and boating on waters throughout the state. The state's 52 conservation officers also enforce general criminal laws, assist with emergencies, natural disasters and many search and rescue operations annually. The division also assumes the lead role for agency Homeland Security and Civil Defense coordination and planning. In addition, the division performs a myriad of other duties, such as:

- Ensuring permit/license compliance and related income to the agency.
- Patrolling Commission-owned areas and leased or managed areas, as well as Nebraska waterways.
- Contacting outdoor participants and non-participants alike.



FAMILY DAY AT THE KEARNEY OUTDOOR DISCOVERY PROGRAM



AT THE MUZZLELOADER RANGE PREPARING FOR A YOUTH DEER HUNT AT PONCA STATE PARK



- Supporting educational and informational programs such as Hunter Education and Boating Safety, civic organization informational programs, school programs, youth mentor hunts, Cornhusker Trapshoot, Youth Skills Camps and Outdoor Discovery Programs.
- Assisting with non-enforcement projects and programs such as fish and wildlife surveys, investigating fish kills and wildlife damage complaints, issuing fur buyer permits, and coordination with and permitting of wildlife rehabilitation organizations.

OFFICERS EQUIPPED TO HANDLE VARIETY OF SITUATIONS

Conservation officers have widespread roles within communities. If something happens in a rural or remote area, there is a good chance that a conservation officer will be involved. Officers are equipped and trained to handle various issues that they may encounter. Some examples from 2016 include:

- When a call came out of shots fired at Lake McConaughy, conservation officers were the first on the scene to render aid to the victim and apprehend the shooter.
- Officers used side-scan sonar to search for a possible missing person in the Missouri River, locate a missing person and vehicle in the Sutherland Supply Canal, and locate a vehicle that had driven into Wildwood Lake.
- In Cherry County, conservation officers apprehended a person suspected of child abduction and, in another case, arrested two rape suspects.
- Officers assisted the Dixon County Sheriff's Office and Nebraska State Patrol in collecting and preserving evidence related to a homicide on the Missouri River.
- An officer helped the Otoe County Sheriff's Office make a felony drug arrest and, in another case, assisted the U.S. Marshals Service in serving a felony drug warrant.
- Officers rescued two people from a stranded boat in the freezing waters of Sherman Reservoir.
- Two officers helped the Nebraska State Patrol pursue a fleeing suspect.
- An officer assisted the Dodge County Sheriff's Office in solving a series of burglaries.



CONSERVATION OFFICER HOLDING EAGLE PRIOR TO ITS RELEASE

- Officers assisted the Nebraska State Patrol in Blaine County in tracking a person who had threatened his family with a firearm.
- Officers helped the Cass County Sheriff's Office recover a body from the Missouri River.



TEACHING BEGINNING SHOTGUNNING AT BECOMING AN OUTDOORS-WOMAN WORKSHOP AT THE NEBRASKA 4-H CAMP



NEBRASKA WILDLIFE CRIME STOPPERS

Nebraska Wildlife Crime Stoppers (WCS) is a cooperative wildlife enforcement program sponsored by Game and Parks and the Nebraska Wildlife Protectors Association (NWP). It offers rewards for information resulting in arrests for game law violations. Initiated in 1982, this program allows concerned sportspersons to report violations and give needed information on wildlife crimes. To report a violation, persons can call 1-800-742-7627 and remain anonymous.

ECONOMIC RESOURCES

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is predominately funded by user pay – 86 percent of the 2016 revenues include permits and stamps. Approximately 14 percent of the 2016 funding came from the State General Fund.

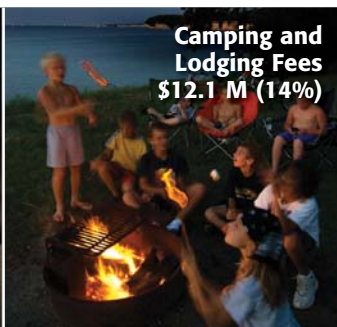
The 17 additional cash/federal funds established for agency use are: Game Fund, Park Fund, Federal Funds, VPA Federal Fund, Fort Atkinson National Park Service Federal Fund, Habitat Fund, Nebraska Outdoor Recreational Development Act (NORDA) Fund, Recreational Trails Federal Fund, Aquatic Habitat Fund, Wildlife Conservation Fund, Game Law Investigation

Fund, Cowboy Trail Fund, Wildlife Education Fund, Hunters Helping the Hungry Fund, Nebraska Snowmobile Trail Fund, State Park Improvement and Maintenance Fund, and Game and Parks Capital Maintenance Fund.

General Fund is supported by money collected by the State Department of Revenue, deposited with the State Treasurer and appropriated by the Legislature. General Fund money is appropriated to the Commission for those operating activities that are not self-supporting (primarily operations of the state park system and nongame and endangered species activities); administrative activities

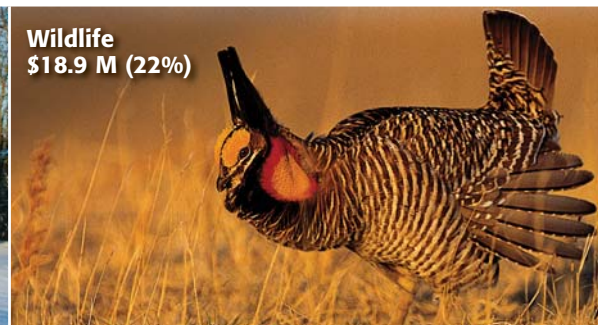
2016 Calendar Year Revenue Sources

(total = \$88.8 million)



2016 Calendar Year Expenditures

(total = \$86.6 million)



that are general in nature, applicable to the entire agency and difficult to prorate among the various other funding sources; and activities that extend beyond the statutory use of the various cash funds.

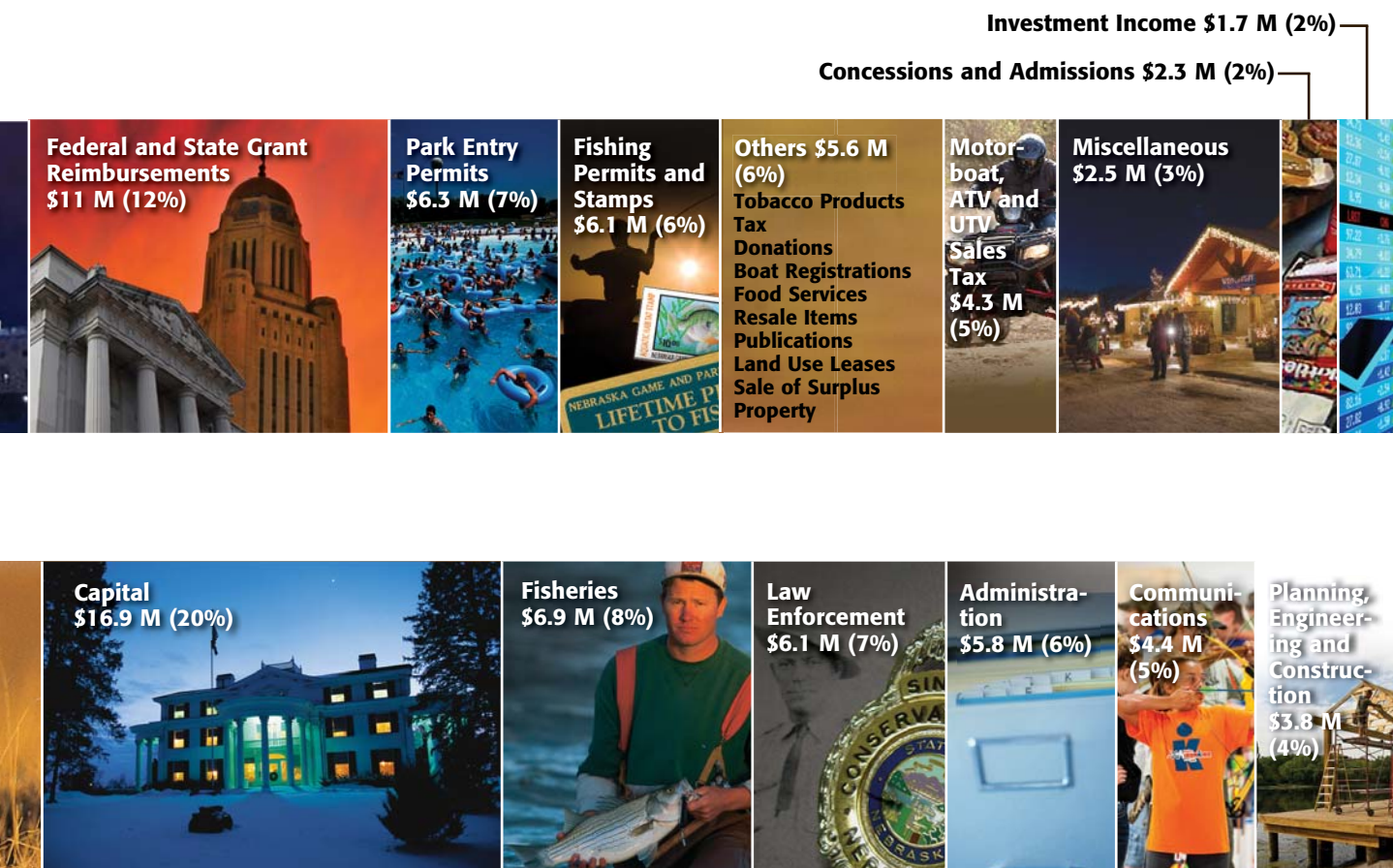
Game Fund derives its revenues from a variety of sources, including hunting and fishing permit sales, Federal Aid reimbursements and interest earnings. This fund is the agency's largest source of funding and is the primary funding source for fish and wildlife activities.

Park Fund is the agency's second largest source of funding. It is used to improve, maintain and operate areas within the state

park system. Major revenue sources include camping and lodging fees, park entry permit sales, restaurant and food services and other park facility use fees.

Federal Grants are the agency's third largest "cash" funding sources. They include reimbursable and direct grants.

Habitat Funds include terrestrial and aquatic funds. They are supported primarily from the sale of the stamps tied to hunting and fishing activities, respectively.



Nebraska Outdoor Recreational Development Act Fund is restricted to the development, operation and maintenance of areas of the state park system. The primary source of revenue is the Nebraska Tobacco Products Tax. The portion of the tax earmarked for NORDA is the equivalent of one cent on a conventional package of cigarettes. This fund is critical to the development and maintenance of the state park buildings and amenities infrastructure.

State Park Improvement and Maintenance Fund is to be used to build, repair, rehabilitate, modify, or improve any infrastructure in the state park system.

Game and Parks Capital Maintenance Fund is to be used to build, repair, rehabilitate, modify, or improve any infrastructure within the statutory authority and administration of the Commission.



MAJOR EXPENDITURE DETAILS

Parks

Includes management and operations of state parks, state recreation areas, state historical parks and state recreation trails.

Funding sources:

Park Cash Fund	70%
General Fund	29%
NORDA.....	< 1%

Wildlife

Includes management and operations of wildlife management areas, private lands habitat work, game and nongame species activities, and engineering services.

Funding sources:

Habitat Fund	35%
Game Cash Fund	32%
Direct Federal.....	28%
General Fund	2%
Wildlife Conservation Fund	2%
Hunters Helping the Hungry Fund....	< 1%

Capital Construction

Includes capital construction in the state park system, wildlife management areas (WMA) state fish hatcheries, aquatic habitat, motorboat access developments, and acquisition of lands for WMA or park purposes, and grant pass-through for community trails and Land and Water Conservation Fund projects.

Funding sources:

Direct Federal.....	26%
State Park Improvement and Maintenance Fund.....	25%
Park Cash Fund	17%
Aquatic Habitat Fund.....	16%
NORDA.....	5%
Habitat Fund	5%
Capital Maintenance Fund.....	3%
General Fund	2%
Game Cash Fund	< 1%

Fisheries

Includes management and operations of state fish hatcheries, fisheries education and outreach, public and private waters resource management, and engineering services.

Funding sources:

Game Cash Fund	75%
Direct Federal.....	23%
Aquatic Habitat Fund.....	1%
General Fund	< 1%

Law Enforcement

Includes fish, wildlife, park and boating law enforcement, public educational programs associated with hunter education, boater education and outdoor recreation.

Funding sources:

Game Cash Fund	76%
General Fund	14%
Park Cash Fund	9%
Game Law Investigation	< 1%

Administration

Includes administrative activities associated with the director's office, personnel, budget and fiscal, information technology, district offices, federal aid, board of commissioners, credit card processing, and planning and engineering services.

Funding sources:

Game Cash Fund	54%
Park Cash Fund	30%
General Fund	14%
Habitat Fund	< 1%
Aquatic Habitat Fund	< 1%

Communications

Includes management and operations of Commission communications, including marketing, consumer research, outreach, events, digital communications, distribution of multimedia news releases, hunter education, and range development.

Funding sources:

Game Cash Fund	77%
Park Cash Fund	21%
Direct Federal	2%

Planning, Engineering and Construction

Includes operational activities associated with planning, environmental review, design, engineering and construction services.

Funding sources:

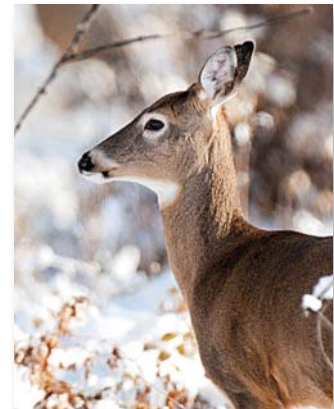
General Fund	67%
Game Cash Fund	11%
Park Cash Fund	11%
NORDA Fund	5%
Habitat Fund	3%
Direct Federal	1%
Cowboy Trail Cash Fund	< 1%
Wildlife Conservation Fund	< 1%

A CLOSER LOOK AT PERMITS

It is not uncommon or unexpected for permit sales to fluctuate from year to year. Some fluctuation is due to weather conditions that influence individuals' desire to be outdoors, some are influenced by individuals' perception of wildlife populations and, thus, their likelihood of success, plus a multitude of other personal factors. This process in which an individual may buy a permit from time to time but not necessarily every year is called "churn." Here is a closer look at some of Nebraska's permits and what factors may influence their rise or decline in sales:



Big game permits – These comprise deer, antelope, turkey and elk permits. The deer population has made a dramatic comeback in most areas affected by the 2012 epizootic hemorrhagic disease outbreak and we have seen a steady increase in both hunter interest as well as biological ability to increase quotas in many areas. Sales for 2016 have continued the upward trend surpassing 2012 levels. Elk permit sales continue to expand with increasing herd sizes in most units. Antelope permit numbers have also seen a slight increase. Despite good population levels and mild weather, spring turkey permit sales were down slightly from 2015. Nebraska's \$5 youth permits (for deer, turkey and antelope) continue to be favorites and likely contribute to growth in nonresident participation.



Hunting permits – These represent small game and waterfowl hunters. Sales showed a slight decrease over 2015. This can be reflective of the apparent shift of deer/turkey becoming more of the gateway to hunting for youth rather than small game.



Fur harvest permits – The decrease in permits sold is reflective of the low prices being paid for pelts.

Veteran and senior hunting/fishing combination permits – The increase in sales is reflective of an aging Baby Boomer population and expansion of qualifying veterans. The annual \$5 fee for hunting (except big game) and fishing privileges, to include all state stamps (a \$64 value) makes this permit option quite attractive for those individuals 69 and older (or 64 and older if a qualifying veteran).



Migratory waterfowl stamps – The likely reason for reduced sales of this required stamp in 2016 is that conditions for waterfowl hunting were not conducive for participation due to the mild fall weather.



Fishing and park permits – These are largely driven by the weather. Unusually mild temperatures in 2016 resulted in people purchasing more permits and getting outdoors earlier than normal.



2016 Permits and Stamps Sold

Permit or Stamp	2015	2016	% Change
FISHING			
Resident annual fishing	113,048	114,593	1%
Resident 1-day fishing	15,143	15,842	5%
Resident 3-day fishing	895	897	0%
Resident 3-year fishing	955	1,829	92%
Resident 5-year fishing	532	861	62%
Nonresident annual fishing	7,186	7,648	6%
Nonresident 1-day fishing	20,739	20,991	1%
Nonresident 3-day fishing	8,387	8,583	2%
Nonresident 3-year fishing	38	48	26%
Nonresident 5-year fishing	11	19	73%
HUNTING			
Resident annual hunting	23,850	23,113	-3%
Resident 3-year hunting	232	237	2%
Resident 5-year hunting	108	129	19%
Nonresident annual hunting	10,681	10,943	2%
Nonresident 2-day hunting	3,775	3,931	4%
Nonresident youth hunt	774	708	-9%
Nonresident 3-year hunting	41	65	59%
Nonresident 5-year hunting	17	21	24%
COMBINATION			
Resident annual hunting/fishing	29,260	29,313	0%
Resident 3-year hunting/fishing	494	757	53%
Resident 5-year hunting/fishing	266	343	29%
Resident hunting/fishing, veteran	6,639	6,787	2%
Resident hunting/fishing, senior	11,682	12,484	7%
Nonresident annual hunting/fishing	748	847	13%
Nonresident 3-year hunting/fishing	12	19	58%
Nonresident 5-year hunting/fishing	6	3	-50%
OTHERS			
Resident annual fur harvest	7,476	6,610	-12%
Lifetime hunting, fishing, stamps	4,530	6,699	48%
Big game	193,002	192,462	0%
Paddlefish	1,875	1,875	0%
STAMPS			
Aquatic stamp annual	159,524	161,763	1%
Aquatic stamp 3-year	1,499	2,612	74%
Aquatic stamp 5-year	815	1,216	49%
Habitat stamp annual	119,359	118,359	-1%
Habitat stamp 3-year	779	1,058	36%
Habitat stamp 5-year	397	496	25%
Migratory waterfowl stamp annual	33,368	31,753	-5%
Migratory waterfowl stamp 3-year	613	850	39%
Migratory waterfowl stamp 5-year	323	373	15%
Total Game and Habitat	779,079	787,137	1%
PARK			
Annual	143,001	149,275	4%
Daily	283,605	295,038	4%
Duplicate	68,879	72,235	5%
Total Park	495,485	516,548	4%
Total Permits and Stamps Sold	1,274,564	1,303,685	2%

The 2016 Commission

Chairman

Mark Spurgin, Paxton

Vice Chairman

Rex Fisher, Omaha

2nd Vice Chairman

Dick Bell, Omaha

Robert Allen, Eustis
Pat Berggren, Broken Bow
Mick Jensen, Blair
Dan Kreitman, Wahoo
Dr. Kent Forney, Lincoln
Norris Marshall, Kearney

Director

Jim Douglas, 402-471-5539

Deputy Director

Tim McCoy, 402-471-5539

Assistant Director

Roger Kuhn, 402-471-5512

This report represents the highlights of activities and events of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission during the calendar year 2016. Complete division reports are available by contacting these administrators:

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Engineering

Jennifer Thompson
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Fisheries

Dean Rosenthal
402-471-5495

Information Technology

Toni Knust
402-471-5549

Law Enforcement

Craig Stover
402-471-5531

Parks

Jim Swenson
402-471-5499

Personnel

Angela Janda-Craig
402-471-5453

Planning and Programming

Michelle Stryker
402-471-5425

Wildlife

Alicia Hardin
402-471-5448

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Northwest District

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Northeast District

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402-370-3374 / Fax 402-370-3256

Kearney Service Center

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Kearney, Neb. 68847-6057
308-865-5310 / Fax 308-865-5309

Bassett Service Center

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Bassett, Neb. 68714-0934
402-684-2921 / Fax 402-684-2816

Omaha Metro

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402-595-2144 / Fax 402-595-2569

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Our mission is stewardship of the state's fish, wildlife, park and outdoor recreation resources in the best long-term interests of the people and those resources.



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